

Exhibit E

ADVERTISEMENT

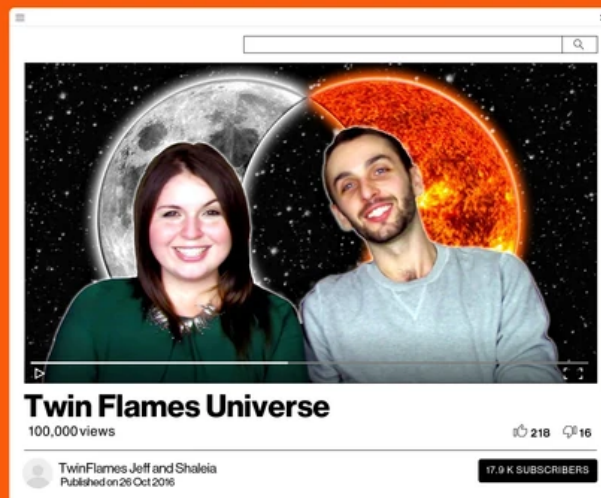
News

This YouTube School Promised True Love. Students Say They Got Exploited Instead

Former students of Twin Flames Universe say they were manipulated by a YouTuber couple claiming a special connection with God.

By **Sarah Berman**

Feb 5 2020, 1:51pm



COLLAGE BY VICE STAFF | IMAGES VIA YOUTUBE

Lenae Burchell was all set to fly from Texas to Toronto in July 2019 to meet a couple who she credited with changing her life, and starting her down a healing path.

Since January 2019 Burchell had been a devoted member of an online spirituality school called Twin Flames Universe, led by two glassy-eyed Michigan YouTubers calling themselves Jeff and Shaleia. Burchell, a 30-year-old single mom, had bought tickets for a two-day “ascension workshop” in Canada the weekend of July 27 and 28. Marketing materials for the event promised participants would “experience heaven on Earth.” For Burchell, it was supposed to be a rare opportunity to meet the Twin Flames Universe founders for the first time.



We Spent a Wild Weekend with the Gun-Worshipping Moonie Church That's Trying to Go MAGA

TESS OWEN

Jeff and Shaleia, who previously went by the names Ender Ayanethos and Megan Plante, have released hundreds of online videos over the last five years about relationships, finding purpose, and fringe New Age concepts. The couple, who claim to share a special spiritual connection with God and each other, charge upwards of \$4,000 for access to more exclusive videos, workshops, and one-on-one “mind alignment” therapies. Their videos and accompanying social media forums cater to viewers who feel lost and alone, and who want to find acceptance and true love.

Twin Flames Universe, also called Twin Flame Ascension School and LifePurposeClass.com, trades in a specific kind of true love that requires a belief in souls and reincarnation. The school claims to help students find their “twin flame,” a more intense version of a soul mate. “A twin flame is your best friend in the entire universe,” **Jeff told YouTube viewers in 2017.** “This person was designed for you by God, and you were designed for this person by God, to be your eternal companion... for all of eternity.”

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TWIN FLAMES ARE (actual definition you N

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TWIN FLAMES ARE (actual definition) YOU IN...



Burchell says she quickly became one of the most committed Twin Flames students in the community, posting in the Facebook group regularly, watching new videos, and calling in to weekly group sessions on Google Hangouts. She spent as much as 30 hours a week, outside of her full-time government job and single-parenting duties, keeping up with coursework, building lists of potential new students, and making sales calls—all time she volunteered for no compensation. Burchell grew obsessed with attracting her suggested “twin flame”—a married man Burchell met at her gym. After repeated spiritual exercises that seemed to encourage fixation, she said she showed up at his work uninvited to prove her “alignment” with love and God. Burchell counts herself lucky that she was never arrested or subject to a restraining order—unlike other members of the group.

Burchell did not end up getting on a plane to Toronto. A week before her trip, she decided to leave Twin Flames Universe, disconnect from everyone on social media, and never look back—a decision sparked by a blowout fight with her family. Now Burchell is joining a growing group of ex-members speaking out against the couple who they say built a cult empire by exploiting their students.

VICE spoke to a half dozen ex-students of Twin Flames Universe, as well as three parents of current members. Former students say they were gaslit and manipulated into volunteering hundreds of hours of free labour, exploited for thousands of dollars, discouraged from seeking professional mental healthcare, and cut off from their families. Parents say their kids are pressured to cut off all family contact unless they send money.

Some students faced arrest and involuntary psychiatric treatment in the wake of their involvement with Twin Flames Universe, ex-members said.

VICE has also reviewed group messages between Twin Flames' highest ranks discussing how to handle a student's death by suicide.



We Watched the Lifetime NXIVM 'Sex Cult' Movie So You Don't Have To

SARAH BERMAN

In Facebook posts the couple leading Twin Flames Universe openly call themselves “the Master Christ,” and their associates **are now attempting to start a tax-exempt church** based on their teachings, according to Jeff.

Janja Lalich, a cult expert and professor emeritus at California State University, Chico, told VICE that Twin Flames Universe fits into a constellation of self-help and wellness cults that sell sweeping answers to life's biggest problems, and disguise thought reform and manipulation practices as therapy. “It's part of this whole movement,” she said. “Part of this kind of fix-it-quick culture we have in America.”

When asked for comment, Jeff and Shaleia denied they are running a cult. “A cult is a (sic) organization of abuse that systematically takes from and harms its members to enrich its founder,” Jeff wrote in one of several emails to VICE. “We created an organization of love and harmony which heals and enriches everyone in it and everyone who is connected to anyone in it.”

Jeff acknowledged that he and Shaleia have referred to themselves as “The Master Christ, eternal ruler of all Creation by God's loving hand” online, but countered that they believe everyone else is Christ, too. “To call someone ‘Christ’ is to reference their natural and harmonious relationship with their Divine Creator,” he wrote.

Cult or not, what's clear is Jeff and Shaleia seem to be doing well for themselves. In videos the couple claim to drive a Corvette, lease a Porsche, and afford other expensive luxuries as a result of their spiritual business. “Shaleia and I have become wealthy from sharing the blessing of our work with the world. This is the American Dream, to come from nothing and make something of yourself,” Jeff wrote. But he also denied being motivated by money: “What we do has never been driven by money, but by a desire to heal suffering in the world.”

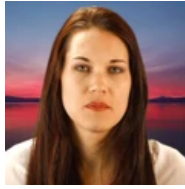
Burchell says she didn't know any of this when she stumbled on to the group while googling soulmate and twin flame theories in January 2019. What she found was a tight-knit online community of open-minded people from all over the world, who accepted her obsession and heartbreak over her unrequited feelings for a married man. Members shared their struggles and triumphs, and credited Jeff and Shaleia with guiding their spiritual process.

Burchell said she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2012, several years before she found Twin Flames Universe. She had tried psychotherapy and was looking for more ways to deal with her trauma, which she said left her prone to blaming herself for the actions of others. At first Twin Flames gave her an online space to talk about her emotional triggers with an assigned coach, but over time the group grew more demanding.

In an email to VICE, Jeff echoed **mental health claims** pulled from their "mind alignment process" website. The company claims their "healing modality" dramatically reduces symptoms of PTSD and resolves childhood trauma. "We have been able to help others achieve miraculous results in their lives without harming themselves or others in any way," he told VICE. If Jeff's use of "miraculous" isn't troubling enough, he also made claims about curing cancer via one extremely vague anecdote. "I once had a client with stage four terminal breast cancer," he wrote in an email to VICE. "During the time I worked with her, her medical reports indicated decreased signs of cancer and the tumor in her breast decreased in size. These findings were from her doctors... I believe physical diseases have spiritual roots."

Burchell was not alone in joining the group in the middle of heartbreak and trauma, nor was she the only one to find a sense of meaning and purpose at first. Burchell says the inner circle told her that God had chosen her to join

the company and their spiritual mission. She paid hundreds a month for coaching and workshops, and started coaching others.



Yes, There Are Women-Led Cults

SARAH BERMAN

Over time students like Burchell, who showed obedience and contributed lots of hours, were promoted to positions of power over others. Burchell says she's a natural leader, and was selected by the inner circle to work on recruitment and launching a new branch of the company. Conversely, ex-members say students who asked too many questions or tried to establish boundaries were demoted and punished.

Twin Flames students paid **\$2,222 for unlimited access to relationship videos**, \$1,899 for **unlimited life purpose videos**, and about \$200 per session for one-on-one work with a coach. If members sold a lifetime membership worth \$2,222, they were eligible for a 10 percent commission—a milestone Burchell never reached during her six months of work. Another ex-student VICE spoke to said she quit her job at a top medical school to do social media, coaching and outreach for the group full-time.

Twin Flames Universe conflates romance and enlightenment in disturbing ways, ex-members say. Achieving “harmonious union” with a twin flame was promoted as a cure-all for life problems, while sickness or romantic failure was often attributed to not “aligning” with God or the group. Through repeated “mind alignment” exercises that reinforced these beliefs, ex-students say they learned to fear leaving the group, or going against Jeff and Shaleia's orders.

Instead of encouraging Burchell to move on from the man she met at the gym, she says the group affirmed that he was her “twin flame,” and said that any rejection was a result of her own failure to do spiritual work.

Like other students, Burchell said she was encouraged to constantly think about her twin flame. “I was a crazy person to him. He would tell me things like ‘I don't want to see you, we'll never be together,’” Burchell told VICE. “Normal Lanae would be like ‘Yeah, I'm going to respect this person's boundaries.’”



QAnon and UFO Conspiracies Are Merging

MJ BANIAS

Burchell says that her thought process was far from normal. Through group pressure and concentrated bullying tactics, she grew dependent on direction from Twin Flames Universe. She says she was coached into escalating contact, including showing up at his work and gym. “You get to the point where you think, I’ve done so much healing work on this. I know I can show up,” she said.

Burchell said any criticism about the group’s coaching and decision making was shot down and turned around on her. “I was told I was just upset about something,” she said. Burchell’s “upset” was characterized as a product of not loving herself enough, or not aligning herself with God, she said.

Some students who resisted coaching were berated and shamed by the group. “Welcome to the real world folks, where scumbags will rape you until you die,” reads one Facebook post signed by “Jeff on Shaleia’s phone” on March 18, 2019, which blames students for not selling enough courses. “Jeff was not being a mean old ass. He was showing you reality. A reality you absolutely refused to see, even when it has been happening to you for weeks while you watch all that you love choke and die.”

Though Jeff maintains the “strong language” in the post is part of his own “blunt, unabashedly human” writing style, ex-students now call it a form of gaslighting and manipulation.

“People with trauma already blame themselves for nine out of 10 things,” Burchell said. “They’re easy to be targeted. They’ll easily accept OK yes this is me—there’s something wrong and I’m the problem.”

Burchell discovered through inner circle group chats that a student had died by suicide in April 2019, which ultimately contributed to her decision to leave. In messages viewed by VICE, one member of the Twin Flames “executive board” said the woman declined one-on-one “mind alignment” therapy sessions with Jeff shortly before her suicide. In the chat, group members offered each other support, but decided not to recognize or remember the student in the larger Facebook group.

The website and Facebook page for Twin Flames' "mind alignment" process now include a disclaimer encouraging students experiencing suicidal thoughts to **contact a suicide prevention hotline**. The disclaimer echoes one posted by another **spirituality influencer named Teal Swan**, who sells a similarly named "completion" process. Both groups borrow from other traditional and pseudoscientific therapies, according to ex members who have studied cognitive behavioural therapy and **internal family systems therapy**.

Another ex-member, who has asked to remain anonymous for safety reasons, said she joined Twin Flames in the aftermath of a serious health scare and a breakup with an abusive partner. She told VICE that she was also coached to ignore rejection and escalate contact with her so-called twin flame, even after he filed a restraining order. She says the group encouraged her to violate that court order, resulting in an arrest and ongoing legal issues.

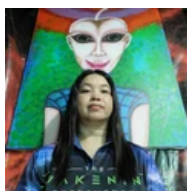
Parents of current Twin Flames Universe students told VICE their kids have been coached not to speak to their families, unless they support the group or send money. Louise Cole, whose daughter joined the group in 2018, said her 28-year-old daughter blocked her from calling and contacting her on social media in early 2019.

Cole describes her daughter as a "go-getter" who has worked in the Peace Corps and taught English overseas. At first Cole said she thought her daughter was taking classes on Chinese medicine, not sinking cash into a New Age YouTube channel.

"I didn't connect all the dots," she said. "She'd always been responsible, level-headed, smart with money." Cole estimates she put as much as \$5,000 toward Twin Flames-related travel, classes, and accommodations before her daughter cut off the whole family.

Two other parents VICE spoke to shared similar stories of scarce contact dictated by the group. One mom said she only heard back after sending thousands of dollars. She asked to remain anonymous out of a fear that speaking out against Twin Flames could prolong excommunication.

Lalich told VICE that family separation is a common tactic used in cults. "It keeps the person isolated, it keeps them from having outside sources that can give them feedback or raise questions," Lalich said.



Meet The Thai UFO Group Convinced That Aliens Will Save Us From Armageddon

JAMIE FULLERTON

When asked about family separations, Jeff and Sheleia told VICE they've never pressured anyone to do anything, and that all their members are adults.

Gregory Abbey was a 29-year-old music producer living in Belgium when he first came across Jeff and Shaleia's life purpose classes in 2015. He was following a handful of other spirituality and self-help YouTubers when their videos popped up in his feed.

"I was just searching for someone I can relate to," he said. "Someone I can talk to about the cosmos, science, art—everything."

Like Burchell, Abbey says he has a history of mental health issues, including complex post-traumatic stress disorder that stems from his childhood. He suggests his experience with trauma and a lack of boundaries growing up might have made it more difficult for him to recognize red flags.

Abbey didn't invest as much time and money as other members he knew—he says he mostly stuck to the free videos and the public Facebook discussion. When he did pay for exclusive classes, he noticed inconsistencies between the glowing testimonials in free YouTube posts, and the emotional pain and financial struggles students expressed in private workshops.

About a year into Abbey's membership with Twin Flames Universe, he was encouraged to romantically pursue a woman who was already part of the group. His discomfort eventually led him to come out as asexual. "All my life I've sort of known this, but I'm asexual," Abbey said. "I never understood it. I always felt alone and odd, this weird artsy dude with no sexual attraction toward anyone."

Abbey left the group in 2017 after Jeff allegedly scammed him into creating an album's worth of music for no compensation. "I put a lot of work into it, I didn't get credited, mentioned, or paid," he said. "Jeff just tricked me." (Jeff did not address VICE's questions about unpaid labour.)

Though ex-members like Abbey and Burchell have been shunned and blocked by their former social circle, they have since found each other and banded together to warn others. One woman VICE spoke to said her sister **encouraged her to write a Reddit post about her experience**, which has become a landing page for excommunicated members and families looking for support.

Parents of current students say they've called Michigan police in hopes that more will be done to hold the couple accountable. Others say they plan to file a civil lawsuit against Twin Flames Universe.

Twin Flames Universe founders Jeff and Shaleia told VICE they are aware of ex-members' legal complaints, but attributed much of the backlash to "consistent, brutal attack" by one former student.

"We have heard of some people contacting police and threatening to pursue legal action, but nothing ever transpired because we are doing nothing even remotely illegal," Jeff wrote. "We are aware of what is right and wrong and we consciously and diligently ensure that everything we do is legal and moral."

The local police department in Farmington Hills, Michigan, where parents say they filed complaints, would not confirm they've received reports or whether an investigation is ongoing.

Despite everything that happened to him and others, Abbey says he didn't think the group was a cult until many years after he "instinctively" blocked everyone on social media.

“If I look back on everything I experienced, it’s a pool of toxicity,” Abbey said.
“I thought I was perfectly fine until I was out of it.”

Follow Sarah Berman [on Twitter](#).

TAGGED: [YOUTUBE](#), [SPIRITUALITY](#), [TWIN FLAMES UNIVERSE](#), [JEFF AND SHALEIA](#), [FRINGE BELIEFS](#)

Subscribe to the VICE newsletter.

Your email

Subscribe

More like this



Distressing Dog Photos Show the Horror of Animal Hoarding

ANNE GAVIOLA

Canadian Fire Crews Are Now Fighting the Australia Fires, Returning a Favour

ANNE GAVIOLA





Drug Experts on Jordan Peterson Seeking Treatment in Russia for Benzo Dependence

MANISHA KRISHNAN



Netflix's Aaron Hernandez Doc Makes Weed a Villain

MANISHA KRISHNAN



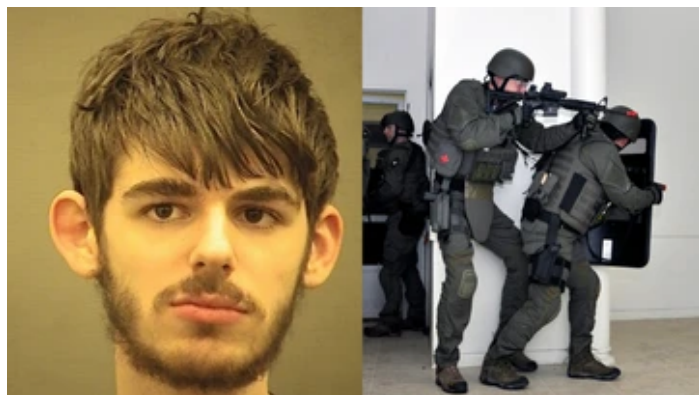
RCMP Denies Drone and Flyover Surveillance at Wet'suwet'en Camps

SARAH BERMAN



Why Work Is Driving More of Us to Therapy

JOSH GABERT-DOYON



If You Want to Change Your Habits, You Have to Plan to Mess Up Sometimes

SHAYLA LOVE

FBI Arrests Suspect in Neo-Nazi Swatting Ring That Targeted 'Hundreds'

MACK LAMOUREUX

Most read



The True Meaning of Family Day is Cocaine

DREW BROWN

I Ditched My Banking Job to Be a Sex Worker

MADISON WINTER



Everyone Scared of Legal Weed Was Freaking Out Over Nothing: Report

Why I'm Asking White Critics Not to Review My Show

VAN AMBA BOMBEI

MANISHA KRISHNAN IN NEWS

TULANNA DUNNELL

News

Distressing Dog Photos Show the Horror of Animal Hoarding

Nearly 50 dogs covered in urine and feces were rescued in Northern Ontario after suffering years of neglect.

By Anne Gaviola

Feb 13 2020, 12:24pm



TWO OF THE NEARLY 50 DOGS RESCUED FROM THE HOME OF AN ANIMAL HOARDER IN THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, ON FRIDAY.
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY

Forty-seven dogs are receiving emergency medical care after they were

Keep Reading

News

Canadian Fire Crews Are Now Fighting the Australia Fires, Returning a Favour

Climate change means emergency responders need specialized, updated training according to wildfire expert.

By **Anne Gaviola**

Jan 7 2020, 11:36am



FIREFIGHTER IN UPWEY, AUSTRALIA. PHOTO BY D. CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHY VIA GETTY.

Cheers greeted Canadian firefighters as they arrived at Sydney's

Keep Reading

ADVERTISEMENT

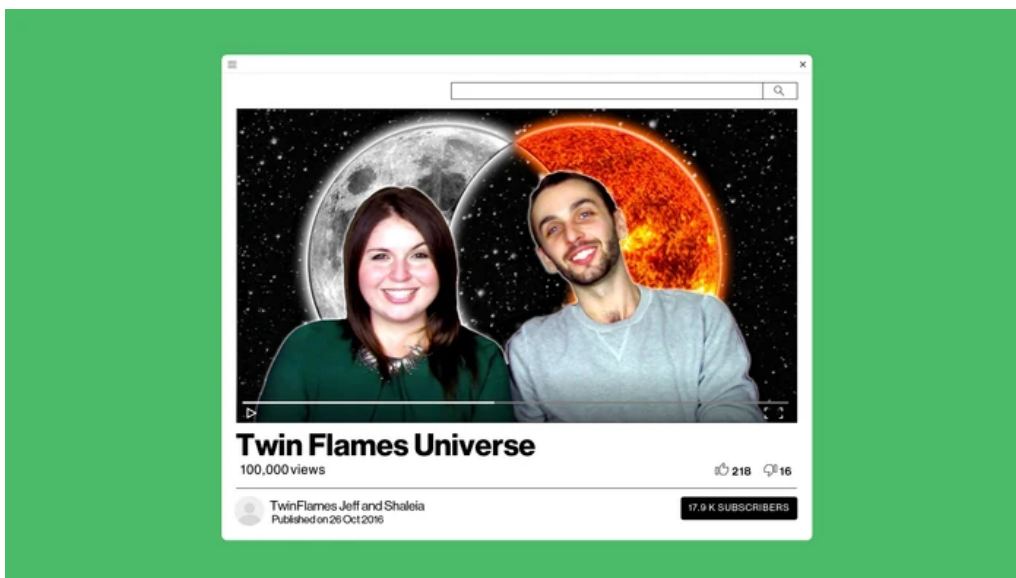
News

Accused Cult Leader Threatened Ex Members After VICE Investigation

Former students of Twin Flames Universe received letters threatening to reveal "VERY uncomfortable" information if they didn't take back their claims.

By **Sarah Berman**

Mar 11 2020, 12:58pm



COLLAGE BY VICE STAFF | IMAGES VIA YOUTUBE

A YouTube spirituality school accused of exploiting its members has sent former students a letter threatening them with imminent lawsuits, police investigations, bankruptcy, jail time, and the publication of “VERY revealing and VERY uncomfortable” information.

Days after VICE published [an investigation into the workings of Twin Flames Universe](#), an online life coaching community that promotes fringe ideas about love, its leaders sent out a letter to ex-members threatening life-ruining consequences for speaking out about family separations, unpaid labour, and a host of other cult-like practices.

ADVERTISEMENT

Former students say the group’s leaders Shaleia and Jeff Ayan claimed to cure post-traumatic stress disorder, cancer, and other medical conditions with a special “mind alignment” therapy. They told VICE students paid thousands of dollars for access to Twin Flames videos, and in some cases were coached into violating restraining orders, cutting off their parents unless they sent money, and working long hours for free.



This YouTube School Promised True Love. Students Say They Got Exploited Instead
SARAH BERMAN

A letter signed by Twin Flames Universe founders Jeff and Shaleia, who previously went by the names Ender Ayanethos and Megan Plante, calls these accounts “lies” spread by an anti-Twin Flames “hate group.” (Though filled with legal jargon, the “cease and desist” is not signed by a lawyer.)

The four-page letter accuses the ex students of bullying, slander, and “cyber-violence.” In it, Jeff and Shaleia claim that ex members will end up bankrupt and in jail unless they retract their statements to VICE and delete all negative comments.

“You will write a complete and effective collective retraction,” reads part of the letter, “and apologize for the lies you told about us.” If the ex-members send a retraction within 48 hours, the letter continues, Jeff and Shaleia write that they will “have no need to publish a VERY revealing and VERY uncomfortable (for you) article” about them.

“This will just be the beginning of our response to your hate group’s attacks if you do not stand down,” it reads.

ADVERTISEMENT

*Do you have information about Twin Flames Universe or similar groups?
We’d love to hear from you. You can contact Sarah Berman at
sarah.berman@vice.com.*

The letter goes on to describe an invasive investigation process, including subpoenas, extraditions, private detectives, and financial paralysis.

“Bankruptcy means it is nearly impossible for you to rent an apartment, rent a room, and even apply for a real world job,” reads part of the letter. “We will not only engage the legal system to take you to court for civil and criminal activities, (your criminal activities will land you in jail) we will hire private investigators to come after you and investigate you.”





I Followed the NXIVM 'Sex Cult' Diet for a Week

SARAH BERMAN

Ex students who provided the letter to VICE called it bullying, intimidation, and blackmail. Though more than a dozen people received it—including some parents and former members who were not interviewed for the story—none of them sent retractions.

Twin Flames Universe threatened to sue VICE over its story, and vehemently denied all cult accusations. An email from Leesie Mappes, Twin Flames' CEO and "senior executive minister" with the group's new church, claims VICE was "scammed" into publishing false accounts by a former student with an agenda to destroy Twin Flames for the benefit of a rival spiritual coaching business.

"This is the same way Hitler treated Jews during the Holocaust (sic)," reads part of the email. "You sought to control the story and fabricate an insane, hellish lie which would benefit your career and the agenda of a small hate group rather than report on reality."

ADVERTISEMENT

VICE spoke to six former students and three families for its story last month, and has since heard from two more ex members and another family who support those accounts of exploitation at the hands of Twin Flames.

Jeff and Shaleia did not respond when asked to comment on the letter and blackmail allegations. When asked about family separation and exploitation last month, Jeff replied, "We never pressure anyone to do anything."

Kabbalah's Fallen Superstar Would Like to Make a Comeback Now

Just don't ask him about the explosive lawsuit accusing his family and the Kabbalah Centre of keeping their most devoted members in hellish conditions.

 Vice / Anna Merlan / Nov 26, 2019

"At first it kind of shocked me," Lenae Burchell, a former Twin Flames Universe student who left the group in July 2019, said of the letter. "To be called a bully when all I did was share my story... I've never been called a bully in my entire life, ever."

Burchell joined the Twin Flames Universe community in January 2019. A single mom living in Texas, Burchell said she was initially drawn in by the group's Facebook forums, which encouraged members to open up about trauma and heartbreak. Burchell sought coaching on her obsession with a married man she suspected might be her "twin flame"—a New Age term for an eternal soul mate. She recalled spending as much as 30 hours a week on Twin Flames projects.

Ex-students of Twin Flames Universe say they practiced spiritual exercises that seemed to encourage fixation on a romantic interest. Participating in the group was conflated with romance, success, and enlightenment, while asking questions and setting boundaries was discouraged as "choosing separation from God," former students said.



Calling Out Sexual Abuse in the Jehovah's Witnesses Is a Horrific Struggle

SUMMER LIN

Arcelia Hugues, a former student who left in September 2019, said that the coaching helped her at first, but then grew more demanding of her time. She spent hundreds of dollars a month on courses, and in fall 2018 was chosen for an unpaid job position with Twin Flames. When Jeff and Shaleia

learned Hugues is trans, Hugues said they “latched on” and told her she was destined to be an LGBTQ activist and trans ambassador for the group.

“I always thought these people knew more about me than I did, so I gave my power away,” she said. “They believed they were certain of what my life purpose was.”

ADVERTISEMENT

Hugues said she was encouraged to seek out other spiritual or LGBTQ online communities, and funnel them to the Twin Flames page with hopes of making commission on new sign-ups. Though Twin Flames suggested she could make as much as “six figures” this way, she said she made about \$500 over the better part of a year. Hugues started her own spiritual coaching practice which earned her between \$300 and \$600 a month, did free Tarot readings, and made videos for Twin Flames for no compensation.

Hugues, Burchell and others say they held back questions and concerns about their alleged mistreatment because they believed “choosing separation” from the group would ruin their chance of being with their one true love in this lifetime.



ARCELIA HUGUES NOW LOOKS BACK ON TWIN FLAMES' GENDER CONVERSION COACHING AS WRONG. PHOTO SUBMITTED

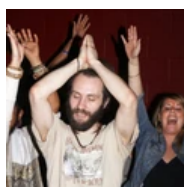
Twin Flames teaches that each twin flame couple has a “divine feminine” and a “divine masculine” person, and that their anatomy should match these “receptive” and “active” roles, according to former students. “They think all divine masculines should be physically male—that’s what God intends,” Hugues said.

Students like Hugues, who identifies as straight, embraced coaching on channeling femme energy. But in live classes and online forums, Hugues said she witnessed a handful of students who identify as gay or bisexual coached

into pursuing new gender identities that fit with Twin Flames' hetero-centred ideas. Students who did not go along with the coaching faced backlash, and in some cases were pushed out of the group, Hugues said.

ADVERTISEMENT

As a trans woman who believes people are not defined by their genitalia, Hugues now looks back on Twin Flames' gender conversion coaching as wrong. She said the teachings erase gay and lesbian identities, and reinforce an essentialist view of gender. "Your soul is your soul—your body is completely irrelevant," she said.



How LA Became a Bastion for People Who Are 'Spiritual, Not Religious'

KATIE BAIN

A parent of a current student confirmed to VICE that their family member has been coached to take on a new name and gender pronouns. The parent asked not to be identified for fear of losing contact. Experts who study cults and other high-demand groups say that family separation is a tool used to prevent criticism and questioning.

In an email last month Jeff alleged family separations are only encouraged in cases of abuse, but did not address claims that sending money improved parents' access. One parent Twin Flames accused of abuse received a letter informing the family they would be cut off in February 2019. The handwritten letter, which has been reviewed by VICE, contains no mention of abuse.

In a Facebook post encouraging one student to cut off her family in April 2018, Shaleia described a parent "implanting lies" in a student's consciousness and not liking a haircut in one of Shaleia's dreams as

examples of abusive family dynamics. (Twin Flames did not respond to questions about their definition of abuse.)

Since VICE's investigation was published last month, more ex students have come forward with stories of bullying and manipulation. "I just wanted to leave, I wanted to not have anything to do with them," Andrea Scott, a Florida-based artist and former student who posted a series of videos about her decision to leave on YouTube in February.

Scott said she left quietly in late 2019, but spoke up about verbal abuse she witnessed after seeing others do the same. She said name calling and other put downs escalated near the end of her time as a Twin Flames student. In one video, she read Facebook posts in a Twin Flames sales group in which Jeff and Shaleia berated students for lagging sales, calling recruiters "rats" and "poor as fuck."

The Truth about TFAS 1 (Twin Flames Universe Jeff and Shaleia)



"Calling people names does not scream spiritual teacher," Scott told VICE. "That just sounds like you're having a temper tantrum."

When asked about "strong language" last month, Jeff said he has always been colourful in his word choice. "I am not afraid to use strong language

when necessary to communicate important points to students, especially if they are struggling,” he said in an email.

Though Jeff and Shaleia’s main YouTube page has been quiet since January, students who remain loyal to the group have posted a flurry of “My Success Story” videos, describing the ways Twin Flames Universe changed their lives for the better.

Students in many of the videos describe being jobless, lonely, unhealthy, and depressed before coming across Twin Flames Universe teachings. Through the group’s life purpose classes, one-on-one coaching, and “mind alignment” therapy, the students say they have resolved their traumas and achieved their dreams.



Why It Took Me Five Years to Realize I Was in a Cult

RENEE LINNELL

Louise Cole, mother of Twin Flames student Stephanie Cole, said her daughter was one of the people who posted a glowing testimonial on YouTube claiming that spiritual work with Jeff and Shaleia cured her of multiple chronic illnesses.

“They all sound alike, it sounds scripted,” Louise said of the videos.

ADVERTISEMENT

Stephanie sent a similar story of healing to VICE by email last month. “This community and work taught me how to have happy, healthy relationships,” she wrote. “I now feel the full spectrum of my emotions for the first time in my entire life.”

Louise Cole received the Twin Flames letter demanding a retraction after speaking to VICE about family separation.

“I had no thought in my head whatsoever about retracting anything,” Cole said.

Burchell said there weren’t any more “deep dark things” that Twin Flames Universe could reveal about her, so she never considered retracting, either. “I was expected to contact VICE and tell them I lied, which would be a lie,” she said. “So you’re threatening to sue me if I don’t lie to VICE? I don’t think so.”

Cole said she is still unable to contact her daughter, but is hopeful that their family will be united again one day.

“We want to help in any way we possibly can. We love her, and we’re waiting with open arms—no judgment—but we just can’t contact her.”

Follow Sarah Berman [on Twitter](#).

TAGGED: [SPIRITUALITY](#), [YOUTUBERS](#), [SOUL MATES](#), [TWIN FLAMES UNIVERSE](#), [JEFF AND SHALEIA](#)

Subscribe to the VICE newsletter.

Subscribe

More like this

